



# SCOPING DOCUMENT

United States  
Department of  
Agriculture

Forest Service

## Pine Grove Geotechnical Project

Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest  
Bridgeport Ranger District

Lyon County, Nevada

November 2017

### Comments Welcome

The Bridgeport Ranger District of the Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest is initiating scoping and welcomes comments on the proposed Pine Grove Geotechnical Project (Project), which is located on National Forest System lands within the Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest. The project proponent, Lincoln Resource Group Corp., proposes to conduct mineral exploration and pre-mineral production activities on the western margin of the Pine Grove Hills, Lyon County, approximately 20 miles south of Yerington, Nevada.

The District has tentatively determined that this proposed activity may be categorically excluded from further analysis and documentation in an environmental assessment (EA) or environmental impact statement (EIS) [36 CFR 220]. A proposed action may be categorically excluded only if there are no extraordinary circumstances related to the proposed action and the proposed action is within a category listed in section 31.12 or 32.2 of FSH 1909.15. This proposed action falls within section 32.2(8) –

*(8) Short-term (1 year or less) mineral, energy, or geophysical investigations and their incidental support activities that may require cross-country travel by vehicles and equipment, construction of less than 1 mile of low standard road, or use and minor repair of existing roads (36 CFR 220.6(e)(8)).*

In developing the Project, the Forest Service encourages the participation of interested persons, businesses, state and local governments, and Native American tribes at this time and throughout the process prior to the decision by the Responsible Official. The Project Plan of Operations can be reviewed at the Bridgeport Ranger District during normal business hours and on the project web page (see How to Comment).

## **Purpose and Need for Action**

The Bridgeport Ranger District received a Plan of Operations (#02-17-04) in June 2017 from Lincoln Resource Group Corp. proposing an exploration drilling and pre-mineral development project for locatable minerals in the Wilson Mining District, Lyon County, Nevada. The agency's need is to respond to the proponent's submittal of a Plan of Operations (POO) and to ensure operations will be conducted so as to minimize adverse environmental impacts on National Forest surface resources (36 CFR 228.8, Subpart A) where feasible. The purpose of this proposed action is to authorize mineral exploration activities consistent with the statutory right of the proponent to explore for and develop mineral resources on federally-administered lands under the General Mining Law of 1872 and with other laws and regulations. The decision for the Forest Service to make is whether to approve the POO as submitted or to approve it with additional measures to protect surface resources. The proponent's need is to determine if economically viable mineral deposits exist within the proposed project area, and to define the nature, extent, shape, and economic value of such deposits.

## **Project Location**

The Project is located in the Bridgeport Ranger District approximately 20 miles south of the Yerington, Nevada. The Project Area lies on the lower, eastern flank of the Pine Grove Hills and adjacent Pine Grove Flats, Lyon County, NV. Exploration and pre-development activities would occur within Section 6, Township 9 North, Range 26 East and Sections 15, 22, 28, 31, 32, & 33, Township 10 North, Range 26 East, Mount Diablo Base & Meridian. The location reference map for the project is the United States Geological Survey's (USGS) Pine Grove Spring 7.5-minute quadrangle. Access and general location for the project is shown on Figures 1 & 2.

The Project is located within the boundaries of the Pine Grove Canyon ephemeral drainage. Ephemeral drainage from the Pine Grove Canyon are "intrastate isolated waters" with no apparent interstate or foreign commerce connection. The project area is located southeast and proximal to the Mt. Etna Inventoried Roadless Area (IRA), and 1+ miles northeast of the Pine Grove Summit IRA; however, none of the proposed work is located within an Inventoried Roadless Area.

## **Proposed Action Summary**

The proposed action is for the Forest Service to authorize Lincoln Resource Group Corp. to conduct mineral exploration and pre-development activities for proposed future mineral development on lands managed by the US Forest Service. The project is expected to commence in the winter of 2017-2018 and would have a duration of one year.

Approval of the POO would authorize Lincoln Resource Group Corp. to perform the following activities:

- I. Drill five (5) groundwater exploration wells
- II. Drill nine (9) exploration (condemnation) drill holes
- III. Drill six (6) geotechnical engineering auger holes, and
- IV. Excavate eleven (11) test pits for evaluation of soil properties

Groundwater exploration drilling of the five proposed wells will be drilled by a licensed Nevada water well driller under a waiver (NAC 534.440) from the Nevada Division of Water Resources (NDWR). The five drill pads will each have dimensions of 30 feet by 50 feet, with drill sumps sited inside the pad perimeters. Initially, groundwater exploration boreholes will be drilled to total depth with 6 inch diameters. Air-lift tests will be performed on holes that encounter water. Boreholes subsequently deemed to have production potential will be reamed to 10 - 12 inches in diameter and cased and screened as warranted. For wells drilled in alluvium that meet desired production capacity, holes will be screened and gravel packed. Aquifer tests will be conducted on the two wells with the greatest potential for production of water. All successful wells will meet NDWR standards and be secured with locking security caps. All completed wells will be sanitary sealed in compliance with Nevada Revised Statutes 534. Unsuccessful test holes will be plugged per state regulations.

Nine exploration drill holes will be drilled using a track-mounted reverse circulation rotary percussion drill rig, drilling 7 inch diameter holes to depths of between 250 and 450 feet below ground surface. Drill pads will be constructed at each of the nine drill sites. Planned dimensions of drill pads are 30 feet by 50 feet, with drill sumps sited inside the pad perimeters. Sumps are designed to catch overflow fluids, if any, from the portable sealed mud pit. Samples recovered from the exploration drill holes will be collected in sample bags by the drill crew and subsequently transported offsite to an assay lab for assaying and additional characterization. Upon completion of the exploration drill holes, each hole will be plugged in accordance with Nevada Revised Statute 534.4371.

Six geotechnical engineering auger holes will be drilled using a truck-mounted drill rig capable of hollow stem auger drilling in soils/alluvium, and diamond core drilling in competent rock. Three holes will be drilled to a depth of 50 feet and three holes will be drilled to a depth of 100 feet. The hollow stem auger will be a six or eight-inch outside diameter, continuous-flight auger. If bedrock is encountered in any of the holes prior to reaching the planned maximum depth, approximately 10 feet of bedrock will be cored utilizing diamond coring techniques. Dimensions of constructed auger pads will be approximately 20 feet in width by 50 feet in length. Upon completion of the auger holes, each hole will be plugged in accordance with Nevada Revised Statute 534.4371.

Eleven test pits will be excavated to evaluate additional engineering properties of soils at the project site. Test pits will be excavated to depths of approximately 15 to 20 feet using a track-mounted excavator with a bucket width of 3 feet. Excavated soils will be temporarily stored adjacent to the test pit until ground conditions have been logged, at which time the pit will be backfilled with the excavated material.

A collective total of 4,172 linear feet of constructed road with a travel width of 15 feet will be created by the proposed project. Overland travel, as opposed to route construction, will be utilized wherever possible. Drill pads will be sited adjacent to or on constructed roads and overland routes. A ground disturbance of 1.03 acres is calculated for the proposed drill pads. Total proposed new ground disturbance for the Project is 2.15 acres.

Equipment and vehicles required for completion of the proposed project will include a track-mounted reverse-circulation rotary drill rig with accompanying pipe/water truck combination, a

rubber-tired articulating pipe/water truck, a truck-mounted hollow stem auger drill/core rig with pipe/water truck combination, a D6 dozer, one backhoe, and a track-mounted excavator. Three 4WD pickup trucks and one flatbed truck will be used to provide access for workers and project materials to the project site. Equipment not being actively used will be parked on private land inholdings adjacent to the Project area. Work crews will stay in surrounding towns and commute daily to the Project Area.

Vegetation and top soil will be stockpiled whenever practical in areas where significant soil disturbance is required. During reclamation, sumps will be allowed to dry and subsequently backfilled with excavated material and covered with stockpiled top soil and organic debris. Disturbed areas will be raked and seeded with a Forest Service-approved native seed mix in accordance with accepted agricultural and reforestation practices identified in consultation with Forest Service personnel. A portion of the reclamation bond would be held for at least three growing seasons to ensure successful revegetation and control of noxious weeds.

Specific measures designed to minimize adverse environmental impacts currently include, but are not limited to, the following:

- All equipment would be washed prior to entering the area to prevent the introduction of noxious weed seeds.
- Dust control will be accomplished by watering access routes as necessary.
- No permanent structures will be built or maintained on Forest Service lands as a result of the proposed project
- Cultural resources identified during a survey of the project area would be avoided by Project activities.
- If undiscovered archaeological or cultural resources are encountered during Project work, activity in that area would cease immediately, the Forest Service would be notified, and the resources would be evaluated. The results of the evaluation would determine subsequent action.
- If ground disturbing activities occur during the avian breeding season (March 1<sup>st</sup> to July 31<sup>st</sup>), mitigation measures such as nest surveys by qualified biologists and buffer zones around active nests will be implemented to reduce impact to migratory bird activity to the extent possible.
- Work will be restricted during the March 1<sup>st</sup> – June 30<sup>th</sup> Bi-state sage grouse breeding and nesting period.
- Lightening will be downward-directed in order to provide for protection to sensitive bat species.
- Sumps will include escape ramps for wildlife and livestock.

Mineral exploration and associated mineral pre-development activities in the proposed project area conform to the Toiyabe National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan of 1986 (Toiyabe Management Plan), particularly the following Standards and Guidelines for Minerals:

*1- Encourage exploration and development of mineral resources and minimizing possible adverse impacts to surface resource.*

*4 - Require operating plans which minimize impacts to surface and cultural resources and provide for reclamation of disturbed areas. (p. IV-57)*

*23 - Reasonable access for mineral exploration, development, and production is guaranteed under the mining laws. The type of access approved will be consistent with the logical development of mineral properties. (p. IV-59)*

Toiyabe Management Plan Management Area 6 direction:

*p. IV-112 - Management will provide for the orderly exploration, development, and reclamation of mining resources in a manner that minimizes effects on range, wildlife, cultural resources, and recreation values.*

*p. IV-116 - Standard #8 under Forest-wide minerals standards & guidelines will be emphasized in areas identified as having highly sensitive resource values; e.g., the Sweetwater area.*

## **How to Comment**

Written comments, concerns, or suggestions for this Project should be mailed or hand delivered during normal business hours of 8:00 am to 12:00 pm and 12:30 pm to 4:30 pm, Monday through Friday, excluding federal holidays to: Jeremy Marshall, District Ranger, Bridgeport Ranger District, HC62, Box 1000, Bridgeport, NV 93517 or sent by facsimile to (760) 932-5899; or hand delivered to 75694 Hwy 395, Bridgeport, CA. Oral comments should be provided during normal business hours via telephone (760-932-5821), in person, or at an official agency function (i.e. public meeting) that is designed to elicit public comments.

To provide electronic comments, copy the following web address into your browser's address bar: [http://data.ecosystem-management.org/nepaweb/nepa\\_project\\_exp.php?project=52850](http://data.ecosystem-management.org/nepaweb/nepa_project_exp.php?project=52850) and click on "Comment on Project" in the list of links on the right side of the web page that opens. To submit electronic comments after the period for the comment web form ends on December 15, 2017, you should email your comments to the project contact as given under "Request More Info" on the project web page. Please use the term "Pine Grove Geotechnical Project #02-17-04" in the subject line of your email.

Copies of all comments submitted, including names and addresses, may be made available to the public. Comments will typically be posted in the "Public Reading Room" on the project web page unless they contain offensive language or meet other criteria for exclusion.

To be most effective, comments should be received by the Forest Service no later than **December 15, 2017.**

## **Contact Information**

For further information on this Project, visit the project web page at <https://www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=52850&exp=overview>, or contact David Risley (760-932-5821, [daviderisley@fs.fed.us](mailto:daviderisley@fs.fed.us)). The project web page can also be accessed by first going to the Forest's home page at <https://www.fs.usda.gov/htnfl/>, clicking on "NEPA Projects" in the Quick Links on the right side of the web page, and then scrolling down to the project link. We thank you for your interest in our National Forests.



For

*Eric Dillingham*

JEREMY MARSHALL

Bridgeport District Ranger

*11/16/2017*

Date

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(1) mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights 1400 Independence Avenue, SW Washington, D.C. 20250-9410; (2) fax: (202) 690-7442; or (3) email: [program.intake@usda.gov](mailto:program.intake@usda.gov).

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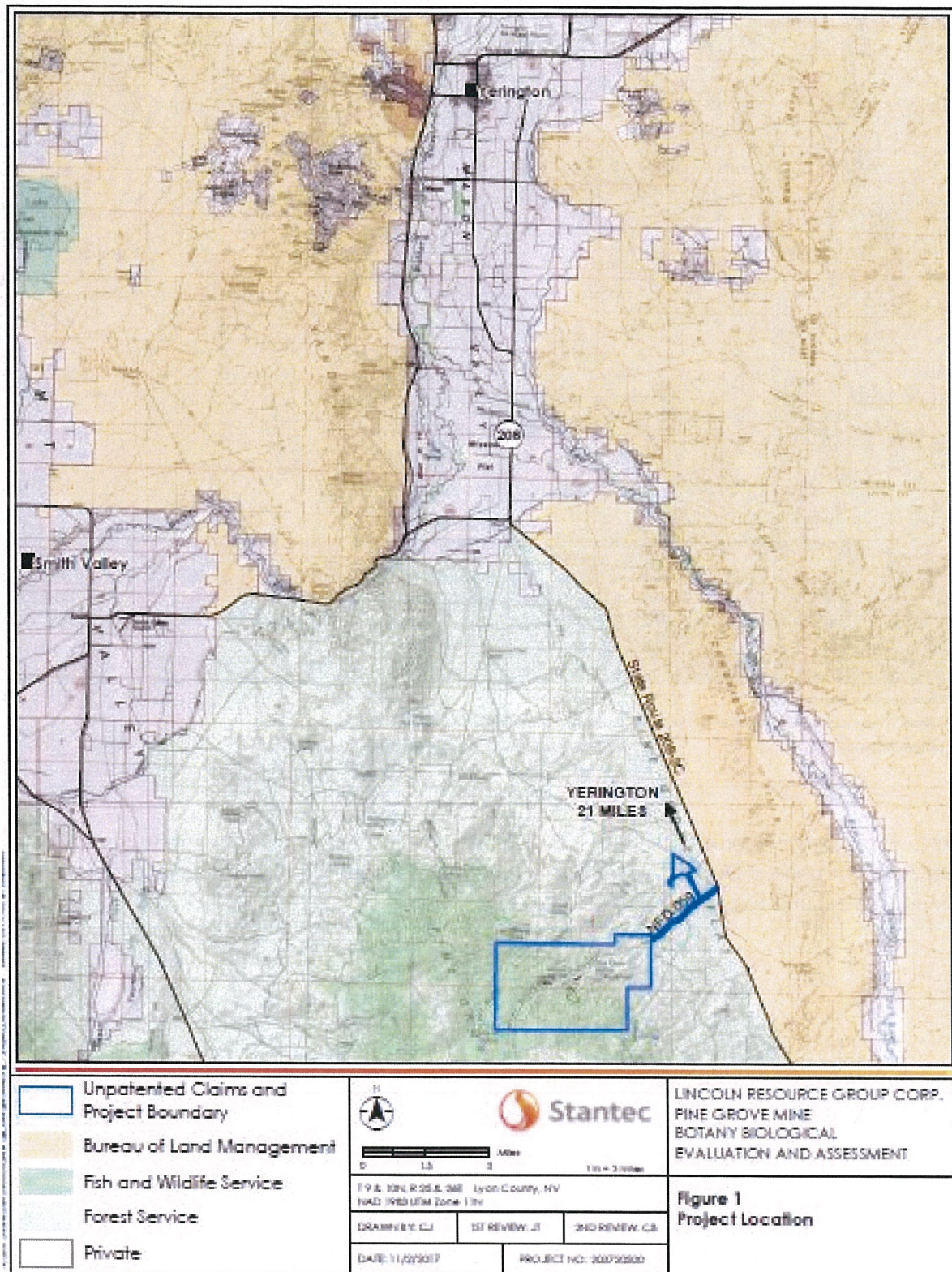


Figure 1. Pine Grove Geotechnical Project – Location of Project Area and Primary Access Route from Yerington, NV.



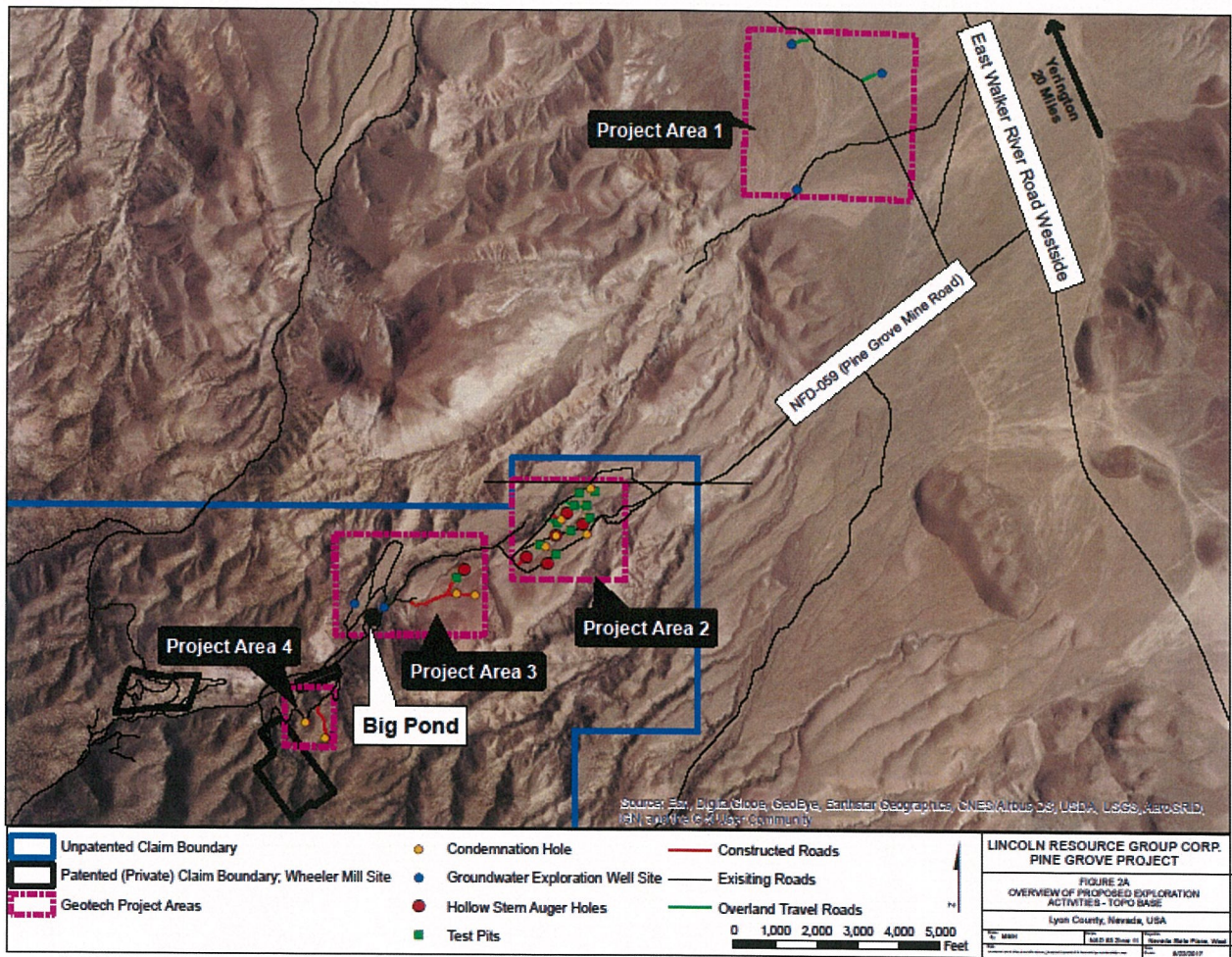


Figure 2. Pine Grove Geotechnical Project – Detailed Project Map illustrating individual Project Areas, Proposed Drill & Auger Sites, Test Pits, & Proposed Constructed Roads, Overland Routes, and Existing Access Routes.